

LESSON 1

In order to attract divine blessings and create a spiritual atmosphere, begin your class by reciting a prayer. The prayer suggested for this lesson is the following:

“O God! Educate these children. These children are the plants of Thine orchard, the flowers of Thy meadow, the roses of Thy garden. Let Thy rain fall upon them; let the Sun of Reality shine upon them with Thy love. Let Thy breeze refresh them in order that they may be trained, grow and develop, and appear in the utmost beauty. Thou art the Giver. Thou art the Compassionate.”¹

After the prayer, ask the children whether any of them know a prayer by heart that they could recite for the class. You can then help them memorize the following prayer in the way that was explained in Sections 2 and 3 of this unit.

“O God, guide me, protect me, make of me a shining lamp and a brilliant star. Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful.”²

It is expected that the children will learn at least a part of the prayer in this class. Once this has been achieved, you may go on to the second activity, learning to sing the following song:

His First Counsel

A
Listen to the voice
A
That makes our hearts rejoice
G D A
His first counsel is this
E7
Possess a pure heart
A
A kindly heart
B7 E7
A radiant heart

A
Listen to the voice
A
That makes our hearts rejoice

(continued on next page)

G D A
His first counsel is this

E7
Possess a pure heart

A
A kindly heart

E7 A
A radiant heart

D A
The heart is a treasure

D A
A gift beyond measure

B7 E
A bounty from your Lord

D A
Protect it from the fire

D A
Of worldly desire

D E A
And freely let it soar

A
Listen to the voice

A
That makes our hearts rejoice

G D A
His first counsel is this

E7
Possess a pure heart

A
A kindly heart

E7 A
A radiant heart

The next activity is to memorize a quotation from the Bahá'í Holy Writings. You could explain the quotation to the children in the following way:

Our hearts are like mirrors. We should always keep them clean. Hatred, envy, and negative thoughts are like dust that stops the mirror from shining. When our hearts are pure, they reflect the light of God, and we become a cause of happiness to others. To help keep our hearts pure, let us memorize this quotation of Bahá'u'lláh:

“O Son of Spirit! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart . . .”³

The children will find the quotation easier to memorize if they understand it well. It is recommended, therefore, that you spend some time discussing the meaning of the words and phrases with them. Here are some sentences that will assist you in doing so.

Counsel

1. One day Gerard and Mary were coloring some drawings. Gerard needed the yellow crayon, but Mary did not want to give it to him. The teacher told Mary that she should share. The teacher gave Mary good counsel.
2. Patricia has to decide whether to spend her money on cookies or on a storybook. Her parents advise her to buy the storybook. Her parents give Patricia good counsel.

Possess

1. Tinaye likes to read prayers before going to sleep. She has a small prayer book to read from. Tinaye possesses a small prayer book.
2. There was a flood and many people lost everything they possessed, but friends came to their aid and soon they had the things they needed again.

Pure heart

1. Cathy became angry and screamed at Susan. Susan was sad but quickly forgave Cathy. Susan possesses a pure heart.
2. Jorge likes to share his cookies with all the children, even with Gustavo, who throws stones at him. Jorge possesses a pure heart.

Kindly heart

1. When people in need come to her house, Ming Ling always takes care of them. Ming Ling possesses a kindly heart.
2. Mr. Robertson is very old. Jimmy helps him carry his fruit harvest to the market. Jimmy possesses a kindly heart.

Radiant heart

1. When I feel sad, my mother always cheers me up and makes me happy. My mother possesses a radiant heart.
2. Obuya became ill and has to spend all his time in bed. He says many prayers, does not become sad, and continues to show forth happiness. Obuya possesses a radiant heart.

When the children have memorized the quotation, you may tell them a story about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that will demonstrate further the importance of purity of heart. As discussed in Sections 5, 6, and 7 of the unit, it will help the children understand the story if you emphasize certain essential points, such as the central theme, the parts of the story that relate to it, and the

conclusion. It is suggested that you mentally review these questions before telling the story: What is the central theme of this story? What parts of the story relate directly to this theme? What are some important details that make the story interesting?

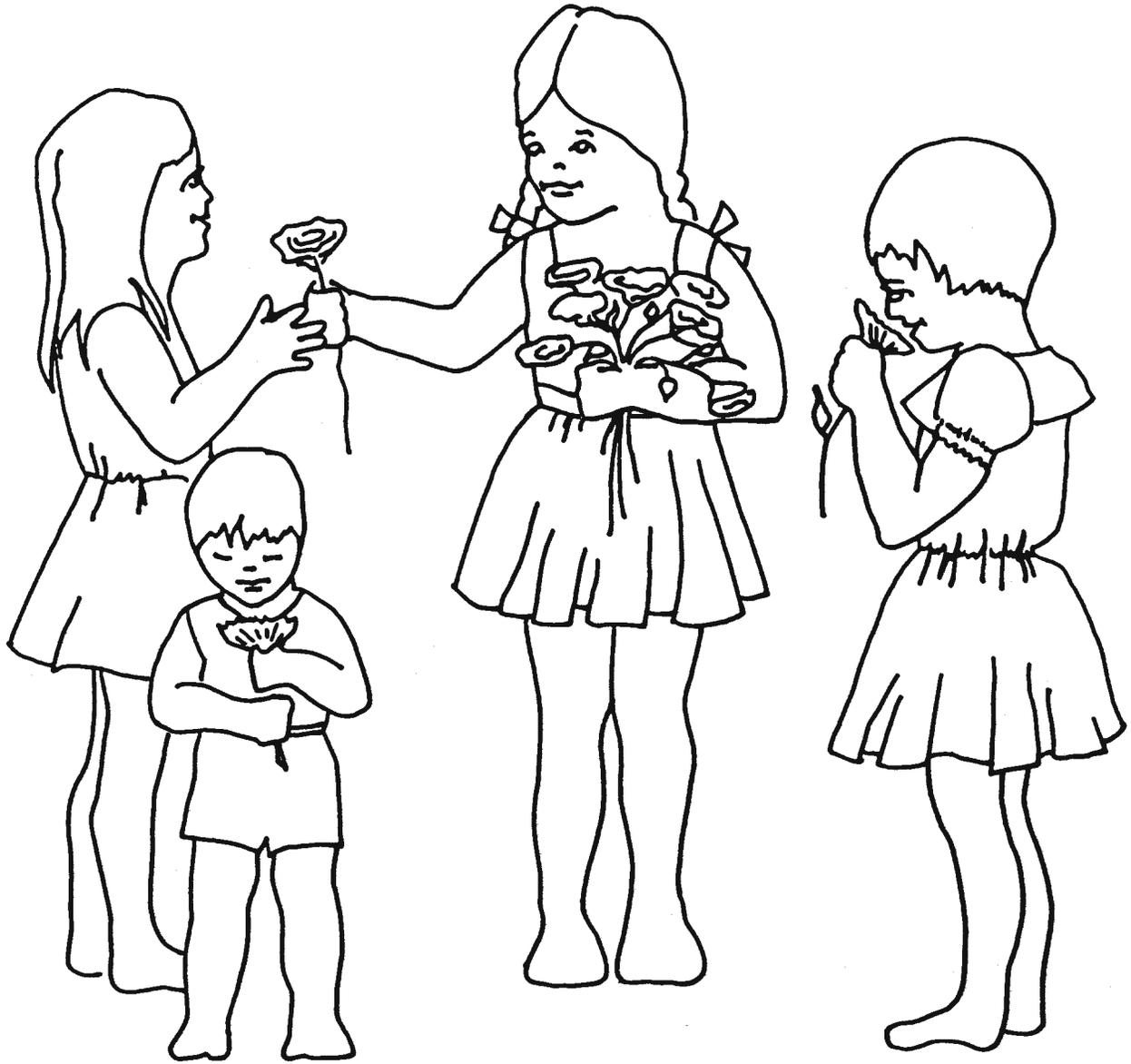
'Abdu'l-Bahá could always tell what was in a person's heart, and He greatly loved people whose hearts were pure and radiant. There was a lady who had the honor of being the guest of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at dinner. As she sat listening to His words of wisdom, she looked at a glass of water in front of her and thought, "Oh! If only 'Abdu'l-Bahá would take my heart and empty it of every earthly desire and then refill it with divine love and understanding, just as you would do with this glass of water."

This thought passed through her mind quickly, and she did not say anything about it, but soon something happened that made her realize 'Abdu'l-Bahá had known what she was thinking. While He was in the middle of His talk, He paused to call a servant and said a few words to him in Persian. The servant quietly came to the lady's place at the table, took her glass, emptied it, and put it back in front of her.

A little later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, while continuing to talk, picked up a pitcher of water from the table, and in a most natural way, slowly refilled the lady's empty glass. No one noticed what had happened, but the lady knew that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was answering her heart's desire. She was filled with joy. Now she knew that hearts and minds were like open books to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who read them with great love and kindness.

The activity that follows the story is a game called "The Burning Thirst". Tie sticks to the children's arms so they cannot bend their elbows, and then tell them to pretend that they are walking in a desert and are very, very thirsty. When they come upon water in cups, they have to find a way to drink it. They will discover that the only way is to help each other, being careful not to get each other wet.

After the game, you can gather the children together and give them each a copy of Drawing 1 to color. At the conclusion of the class, two or three children can be asked to recite a quotation or prayer they know as a reward for praiseworthy behavior, or you may say the closing prayer.



“O Son of Spirit! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart.”